

The launch of the HeadLine PIE

The HeadLine team has spent the last year refining the design of our model of the hybrid library, the Personal Information Environment (PIE), designing and populating the resource database (which is based upon the HeadLine Resource Description Model), implementing the Authentication-Broker and developing and launching working versions of the PIE.

The HeadLine PIE is a web-based system which provides the user with a "one-stop-shop" - a single interface to both print and electronic information resources and services (hence hybrid). The PIE uses portal-type technology to present an information environment that is tailored to its user's needs and allows user customisation. The user is presented with a page (or pages) of information resources that are of relevance to their subject area or course. Users are able to create and to customise their own PIE pages, and they can share these with other users with common interests, such as researchers in the same field or students on the same course. The PIE has been developed entirely within the project, with software tools and components that are free for educational use.

The current interface to the PIE can be seen in the illustration below.



Launch events

In early May 2000, the first version of the PIE was launched to library staff, academics, and to students on several target courses at the University of Hertfordshire. This first version contained a page of resources of relevance to each target course and it allowed the user to add resources and web links to their own pages and lists. It was fairly basic, offering a limited number of customisation functions.

In July 2000, the second version of the PIE was launched at the London School of Economics (to library staff and subsequently to academics and researchers in the Department of Economics) and at the London Business School (to Library staff and subsequently, to academics and researchers in the Institute of Finance and Accounting). The University of Hertfordshire were seamlessly up-graded to the new version in mid August.

The current PIE has an increased range of customisation functions. Users are able to rename pages and lists and also to delete pages and lists on pages that they have edit rights to. Users can filter their page listing - they can remove pages from the menu on the left side of the screen. Perhaps most importantly, users are able to share pages that they own with their friends/colleagues by assigning read and edit rights.

A further new PIE version (1.3) is now being tested prior to release in November 2000. This version will enable users to search the resource database for resources that are relevant to their research. A search for resources relevant to finance may retrieve resources such as the Financial Times, FAME (analysis of UK company data) and Biz/ed (an Internet gateway to business resources). Users will also be able to search two or more databases simultaneously. A search for "resource economics" could be run on both the Financial Times archive and the library catalogue at the same time.

End-user Electronic Document Delivery

This was developed by HeadLine as one of our 'discovery-to-access' components to facilitate access by remote users to library content (such as journal articles) held in print-only form, inter-operating with the RLG Ariel software which is widely used for 'scan-on-demand' delivery between libraries, such as the Lamda Consortium in the UK.

It allows end-users to place direct or librarian-mediated requests for items, and then automates the process of notifying the user of delivery, making the scanned document securely available for one-time access via a web-browser. Apart from the technical problems solved, development of EEDD has also allowed us to explore some of the issues involved in using electronic 'signatures' to comply with Copyright Licensing Agency regulations.

Following a trial service to users of the LSE Library, EEDD is currently being piloted between three Lamda Consortium member libraries, and has also been cited as an essential element of a proposed new national document access service which has been granted JISC funding.

Statistics

Every action performed within the PIE is automatically recorded. For instance, the PIE logs how many times each resource is accessed (and this can be broken down by department/individual user). This data can assist with collection development decisions, with decisions regarding the optimum number of concurrent users (where licensing restrictions exist) and with the effective marketing of resources. The number of staff and students from each department using the PIE is also recorded. This information can ensure effective targeting of any PIE publicity and marketing.

The evaluation of the PIE

The evaluation of HeadLine's hybrid library model has commenced. Detailed recording of staff effort involved in implementation and user support, and collection of qualitative feedback from library staff and end-users has been undertaken. Feedback has been positive, several people have mentioned that they are looking forward to the implementation of search functionality. Statistics obtained from the PIE logs have also been encouraging. People are using the PIE to access resources, and they are using the customisation functions, such as adding resources and web links to their own page.

A more formal user study is planned to occur during the Autumn Term 2000. The study will look at how users use the PIE and will seek to evaluate the PIE's functionality. Selected users will be invited to complete an online questionnaire. The qualitative data obtained will be used in conjunction with the quantitative statistics to provide recommendations for future improvements to the interface, customisation processes and increasing functionality.

Guest access

The HeadLine team is keen to get feed-back on the PIE from the wider library community. Guest access to the PIE (subject to any copyright restrictions associated with resources that it contains) was launched in October 2000.

To register as a guest user complete the web-form at: www.headline.ac.uk/guest/regform.html. Guest users will be invited (but by no means obliged) to participate in the PIE evaluation. Further information and instructions for becoming a guest user are also available on the HeadLine website www.headline.ac.uk/.

Background to the Project

HeadLine (Hybrid Electronic Access and Delivery in the Library Networked Environment) is one of five Hybrid Libraries projects funded under the Electronic Libraries (eLib) Phase 3 programme of the UK Higher Education Joint Information Systems Committee.

Project Partners are the London School of Economics, London Business School and the University of Hertfordshire.

This three-year project began in January 1998 and aims to design and implement a working model of the hybrid library, in actual academic environments in the subject areas of Economics and Business Studies. In accordance with the aims of the Hybrid Libraries programme, the project will present the user with a wide range of library resources, regardless of physical form, via a common Web-based interface.

The project aims to take users from Resource Discovery to Resource Access, and will use a Personalised Information Environment to provide a tailored responsive service to its users.

This is one in a series of HeadLine Newsletters, each focusing on a Hybrid Library Issue. Please note that the project does not guarantee that all the features mentioned above will be provided. To receive regular copies of the newsletter and invitations to try out new technologies please join the headline-users mailing list at www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/headline-users/.

For more information or copies of this newsletter please email: headline@lse.ac.uk.

